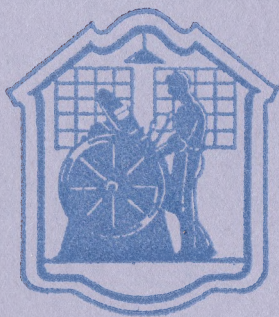


The Leadstacker




*Number Twenty-six
May, 1993*

This issue respectfully dedicated to
the memory of

PATRICIA A. SAXE

Down On The Farm

T HAS now been well over a year since this little journal has appeared and I think it's time this printer got back into his shop and produced some work. Perhaps a few words of explanation about what I've been up to may clarify the absense of this journal. Please note that this is not an excuse for my inactivity at the press which was just laziness on my part.

About two years ago my wife Robyn and I began to search for a new place to build a home and shop more appropriate to our needs. Our present home does not work with our current lifestyle nor will it accommodate our anticipated needs in the future. Those of my readers who keep up with my crazy collecting habits can well imagine how I've outgrown my current print shop. Robyn's shop has also become inadequate for her needs. Robyn and I are very dedicated to our chosen crafts and our works are a big part of our lives. We also felt that we wanted to get away from the city a bit and possibly have a little more to insulate us from our neighbors. Robyn and I both have a love for natural things and wanted a place where our surroundings are wilder and freer.

We began looking for twenty to forty acres outside the city. We weren't interested in a real farm, just a piece of land with lots of trees and maybe

a pond or stream. The area west of Little Rock seemed the most inviting to us as there are lots of hills in that direction not to mention that most of the city's services are on that side of town. For months we searched, drove, walked and talked. We never seemed to find just the right place that suited us both. We finally found a twenty acre plot that could be made suitable for our needs. The price was more than we wanted to pay and it just wasn't that *perfect* place we wanted. The realtor we were working with finally had one other place that might work for us but it was considerably more acreage than we wanted. We were shown the property and did agree that it was exactly what we wanted but was certainly more land than we envisioned at the beginning of our search. After some discussion between ourselves and the realization that this would be the last place we would ever live and that we really wanted to do it right this time, Robyn and I purchased this property. We now have been spending most of our time planning and preparing for our move to our new place in the country.

Located at the end of a short county road, after traveling a minor state highway, our new property has every natural feature we could want. Contained within or running through our 237 acres are open pastures, gentle wooded hills, a small creek, a seven acre lake, and a small river bisects the property. There is a state park half a mile

away that contains over fifteen hundred acres and most of our new neighbors own several acres rather than small lots. Even though we will be only about thirty minutes from downtown, the area is still undeveloped and comparatively wild. On entering our property one sees a large irregularly shaped field. This field has been mowed only sporadically in the past and the fence rows have begun to creep inward providing excellent cover for birds and other small animals. After driving a few hundred yards, one crosses the small creek. During the summer months this creek usually dries up completely but in the rainy seasons can overflow its banks and flood the field and road. On the other side of this creek are more small fields again with encroaching fence rows and woods. About half way across the property we reach the Little Maumelle River. During the summer this little river, almost a creek, is placid and wadeable but after a heavy rain, rages out of its banks, over fences, fields and brush, carrying with it heavy debris of dead trees from upstream. There is a small bridge over the river but at flood stage it's under water as much as five feet. Beyond the river and this bridge is where we'll be building our home and shop so the possibility of being marooned in or out of the house is quite real. Because this is under the jurisdiction of the Corps of Engineers, the idea of a new higher bridge becomes a very expensive proposal. For the time being we have put this project on the back burner.

Beyond the river lie the wooded hills and the choice building sites. If you were to take the road straight ahead into the tree line and up a little valley you come to the site of our new shop. Driving up this little valley you would pass many large cedar trees from which the name of our property—Cedar Glen, was derived. Both the road and the shop site were carved out of the woods by the new owners. The larger oak trees we had to cut were either sawn into lumber for use in the new house or as large timbers for Robyn to use in some of her planned sculptural work. The smaller trees were cut into firewood. The new shop will cover twenty thousand square feet and contain not only larger shop areas for Robyn and me but also room to store all my extra equipment, Robyn's stockpile of wood, several old cars, a workshop for working on cars and farm equipment, and a small living area containing a full bath and small kitchen. The construction of this building is underway and should be completed by the end of this summer.

If you were to turn left after crossing the Little Maumelle, you would drive along the river for a short distance before turning away from the river and up a small hill. Midway up the hill you would come to our little lake on the left. An earthen dam between two small ridges forms the triangularly shaped lake. The dam is relatively free of trees and brush but the other two sides of the lake are covered with woods right to the edge of the water.

The lake is well stocked with bass, bream, and catfish. Continuing on the road as it veers slightly away from, but still along side the lake, you come to the end of the road. At the end of this road is a little log cabin just built. The cabin is one of those kit log homes seen advertised in magazines. Robyn and I acted as primary contractors for this little home, subcontracting much of the work to specialists. The logs are six by twelve inch square cut Western Hemlock joined by half dovetail joints. The house contains a living/dining area, a small kitchen, three bedrooms, and two baths. Across the back of the house we've built a large deck that overlooks the lake which is only twenty yards away. This cabin will become a guest house after the main house is built.

On the road before reaching the cabin but still overlooking the lake will be the site of the main house. Robyn and I have yet to discuss our proposed home with an architect so the building of it is still a couple of years away. Our idea is to have a home built around our collection of art and a facility to entertain artists and printers. We hope to have enough bedrooms to invite several people to spend some time with us and maybe even host *small* conferences or workshops.



Bring 'Em Back ALIVE!

I HAD the good fortune to be able to attend the American Typecasters Fellowship conference in Williamsburg, Virginia last summer. While the conference was very pleasant and informative, I did get a shock while I was there. Preliminary work on the cabin was underway while I was in Virginia and even though the work was under the supervision of a subcontractor, I worried that things might not go according to plan. To alleviate or at least confirm my fears, my mother was assigned the task of checking on progress at the farm. On phoning her one evening, Mom informed me that the power company was working on getting us electricity, the foundation contractor was laying blocks, and that there was an alligator in the lake! My mother is an expert at nature observation and I seldom, if ever, doubt her reports concerning flora and fauna but this time, for a few seconds, I had my doubts. We have had beavers in the lake but an alligator? Mother reported seeing the beast on two occasions and watched it for some time through binoculars. The 'gator had even made advances toward her dog. I was convinced and most anxious to return home to see our new "pet."

Naturally, as soon as we returned home, we

headed out to the farm to try to see our 'gator. On arrival at the lake we searched and searched but no alligator—maybe he had left. The following day I had to be at the construction site and once there had some spare time so I searched the lake in a fishing boat. This time it didn't take me long to see the alligator and there was no mistaking it for a beaver or any other creature. During the next couple of weeks, not only did we see the alligator several times a day, but were able to ascertain where it stayed during the day. Usually I could walk toward the lake in a certain area and the alligator would leave its hiding place and swim toward the safety of the middle of the lake. On several occasions we were able to get very close to the 'gator while we were in the boat or canoe. We were also able to get several good photos of our 'gator.

Alligators in south Arkansas are very common but here in the central part of the state they're seldom reported. About a month before our 'gator arrived two were captured near the Arkansas River less than ten miles from our place. After some discussion we decided that the 'gator would have to be removed. There was some concern for the safety of our dogs, ourselves, or any visitors. It wasn't too surprising to learn that the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has an alligator capture specialist. On the arranged evening the capture specialist and a couple of assistants arrived at our lake.

After loading a seemingly small amount of equipment into our boat, the capture specialist waited until dark before setting out. With a small army of our friends and relatives as an audience, we slipped onto the water, the capture team in the fishing boat, me and a state park employee in a canoe and my brother and his girlfriend in another canoe. After I pointed out where the 'gator should be, the capture specialist shined a large spotlight in that direction. Sure enough, two large yellow eyes were visible only ten yards away. Holding the light steady in the 'gator's eyes, the capture team cruised right up to it and slipped a wire noose over the monster's head. The wire noose was at the end of a stout ten-foot pole and when the noose was tightened the 'gator started struggling. The capture specialist kept the thrashing alligator in the water for about five minutes while it wore itself down. Then he deftly pulled it in the boat and his assistant quickly but very carefully slipped his hands up the 'gator's body from behind, grabbed it's snout and held it shut while the specialist put several large rubber bands around its mouth. Still holding the pole and noose firmly, they motored back to the crowd on shore. Stepping ashore they deftly dragged the alligator out of the boat and onto the bank.

When we were seeing the alligator in the lake it looked huge, six, seven feet, maybe more. Once in captivity, we found it to be only five feet long

and weighing less than sixty pounds. The Game and Fish officer said that the alligator was a female and that she was five or six years old. He would offer no explanation of how she arrived at our lake but hinted that someone might have dumped her there. Her skin was surprisingly soft, flexible and beautifully mottled. Her eyes were a haunting yellow. She was released that same night in the state park half a mile away. The park is mostly a huge cypress swamp where she'll be happy, we're sure. Having canoed this swamp many times I feel sure that our little 'gator will probably live out the rest of its life without being seen again because of the many backwater areas that will hide, protect, and feed her.



DO UNTO OTHERS

BEING A relative newcomer to amateur journalism, it's sometimes hard for me to understand this practice of criticism that is precipitated by some journalists. A little constructive criticism seldom hurts most people when tactfully applied, but it seems to me that *some* criticism that I see in the bundles is vindictive, vicious, and pointless. Sometimes some of this criticism is just downright nit-picking.

In my life I've *attempted* to adhere to the old policy of not saying anything if I can't say something nice. I think it would be appropriate to see this attitude prevail in the bundles too. Amateur journalism is a hobby, something most of us do for pleasure: why soil it by needless aspersion? The bundles are public places; why humiliate individuals in public? Could this be one of the reasons that newcomers to our hobby are sometimes reluctant to participate or that they disappear after a couple of attempts at publishing?

The reasons for setting one's self up as a critic are not clear to me but if you must criticize, why not use a little tact? Instead of saying, "Mary Doe's typesetting stinks," or "John Smith's poetry is syrupy," it would be much more pleasant to see, "Some amateur journalists should do some self-examination of their typography," or "Some recent

poetry seen in the bundles was overly romantic." Better yet, if a person is such an authority on a subject, why not instruct rather than criticize? Personally, I would much rather read an article about how to do something instead of an article berating me or my fellow journalists about what we did wrong. As an example, see Gale Mueller's outstanding article about the use of initial letters in the *American Amateur Journalist*, Volume 57, Number 2, for January of 1993 entitled "In The Beginning." Here we are shown how to do something, not verbally horse whipped for not doing something or for some error we committed.

It amazes me that some people take amateur journalism so seriously. I can't understand the hard feelings that have been generated by some and the true hurt that has been inflicted on others. We all have egos, some of us have larger ones than others. Why must some people try to damage our egos? Nothing in this hobby is so important as to destroy a person's self-esteem or make bitter enemies for lifetimes.

Speaking for myself, but I believe I speak for several, my participation in a *jay* is something pleasurable that I do for myself, self-gratification if you will. My typography in this journal is not professional and at times can be amazingly off-beat but as stated in more than one issue, the *Leadstacker* is a platform on which I experiment. I attempt, I play, and hopefully I learn. I think I have learned.

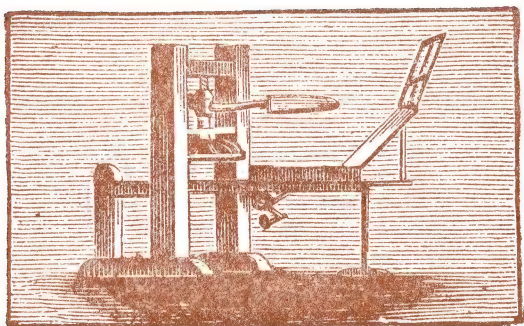
Likewise, I'm quite sure that my command of the English language is laughable to some who have spent more time in its study than I. I learn best by doing and I have been trying and hopefully my writing has improved too.

If you must criticize, do it gently or broadly so as not to injure those of us with large egos, thin skins, or sensitive natures. If you still feel the need to be specific in your criticism, why not do it in a personal letter?



Souls dwell in printer's type.

JOSEPH AMES

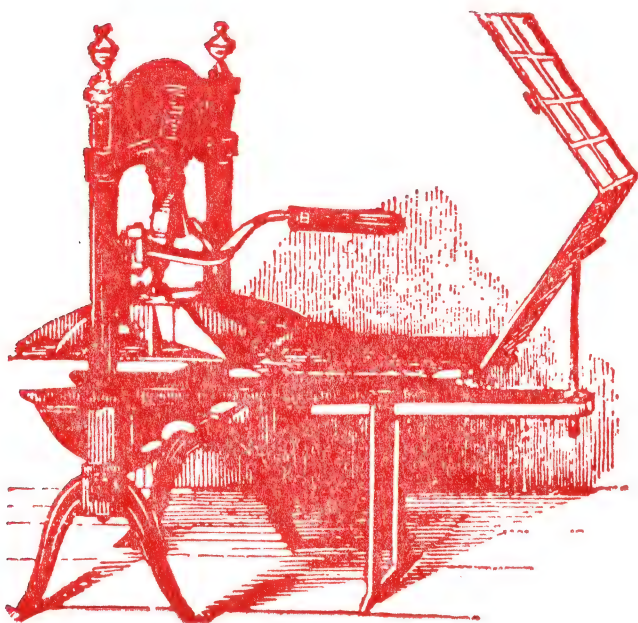


PRINTING

Blest be the gracious Power that taught mankind,
To stamp a lasting image on the mind;
Beasts may convey, and tuneful birds may sing,
Their mutual feelings in the opening spring;
But Man alone has skill and power to send
The heart's warm dictates to the distant friend;
'Tis his alone to please, instruct, advise
Ages remote, and nations yet to rise.

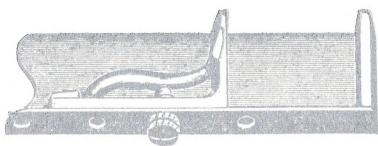
—Crabbe

*A song for the press—the printing press,
Of the good old-fashioned kind.
Ere the giant machine, with its pulse of steam
Pushes it out of mind.
In days of old, our fathers bold,
With its sturdy frame have wrought
The words and passions and deeds of men
Into pages of burning thought.*



*He patched the windows to shield from storms,
He leached the lye to wash the forms,
He watched to close the open door,
He washed the rollers, he swept the floor,
He rolled the forms like a tired snail,
While the pressman pulled the devil's tail.
He gave the editor's horse his food,
He took the proofs, he carried the wood,
He built the fires with a smutty face,
He blowed the dust from the dirty case,
He carried the papers in sun and shade:
And thus he was learning the printers' trade.*

Alvin Robinson



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JOHN HORN
Shooting Star Press
7801 Westwood Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72204

but notice is hereby given that your cards and letters may not be answered until next winter, possibly later.

